

Is It Time To Be Outlaws Again?

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Only large-scale civil disobedience will make our leaders address economic injustice.

In 1989, Bob Dylan recorded a song titled "Everything Is Broken". That song seemed to go largely ignored, perhaps because it seemed to be only a pessimistic lament that offered no suggestions for how to go about fixing the "everything".

But as with many of his songs, it was prophetic. Lately, many Americans are experiencing the feeling that everything is broken, but people in many other countries have had this feeling for a long time.

While it is not useful or necessary here to document exactly when the US decline began, it can be generally and safely assumed that for a substantial part of our population, which Occupy called "the 99%", the most dramatic part of the decline began with the near total economic collapse of 2008.

Although it was the bankers and their partners in crime known as hedge funds who created the crisis, it fell to the taxpayers to bail those banks out of their looming bankruptcy, thereby saving capitalism from itself.

This bailout, while actually guaranteeing greater profits for the banks already large enough to swallow smaller institutions, also allowed the banks to metastasize like a rapidly growing cancer into previously unattained power, both economic and political. This growth, despite the claims of our elected officials at every level, did little to relieve the working class, the 99+, from continuing economic and political decline.

Let's look at some of the facts about the current economy in the United States:

- **Income inequality** US now 4th worst in the world.
- **Productivity vs wages** Real wages up 5% since 1979, productivity up 75%
- **Poverty** About 16% (over 50 million) of US in poverty, worst since 1993
- **Status of children** One out of 6 on food stamps, 20% in poverty
- **Average CEO vs average worker** 240 to 1 in 2012, 20 to 1 in 1965
- **Wealth controlled by 1%** Top 1% control 36%, top 10% control 75%
- **Jobs** 7 million with multiple jobs, 2.6 million can only find part-time jobs
- **Home ownership** Almost 20% living with mortgage greater than value of home

These figures above should be enough for anyone with even a shred of moral conscience (never mind political consciousness) to realize that we are, in truth, living in a nation that not only violates much of traditional capitalist doctrine, but the very core of our beings, our morality, our ethics, and our belief (present in almost all of us) that we bear some collective responsibility for each other's well-being.

Putting morality aside, a massive and continued decline of general living standards is not only unhealthy for YOUR family, but for our entire society, our larger family, and poses great and continuing danger for our children's futures.

And so the question looms before us of how to fix the damn thing. Is it by continuing to count on an electoral process that clearly is not only dominated, but almost completely controlled by the banksters? Should we, every 2 or 4 years, simply be electoral activists who try to persuade our neighbors and friends that "this time it will be different"? Can we honestly expect voters to believe that electing one corporate funded (and therefore owned) candidate over another will make a difference?

Or shall we look back at our history and realize that, in fact, REAL change, the kind of change that threatens to topple the status quo, the change that makes ordinary people proud of ourselves, aware of our power, convinced that we CAN create a world that lives in peace, feeds the hungry, provides jobs for most if not all, and prevents those in power from continuing to rule our lives, THAT change only comes about by people taking action, by resisting, by making clear that we are willing to risk all to gain all and that we really have no other choice.

Yes, some will continue to argue that in a democracy, we can make that change via the ballot box, but to believe that, one must totally ignore the fact that what we called "democracy" has been hijacked by those with the money to finance not only the electoral campaigns, but the life styles of those legislators, with promises of future board and lobbying jobs when they retire from office, and thereby effectively purchasing those officials.

No real change, the kind of change that creates a humane culture and world, will come about by voting, although electoral politics, especially centered around radical 3rd party candidates, can sometimes work to aid that resistance.

Instead — and again — we must revisit the lessons learned from various human rights struggles of the past.

Unions, which helped to abolish wage slavery and the inhumane working conditions suffered by so many, became recognized and legal by the actions of millions of workers across the US who defied existing laws, resulting in many being jailed, beaten, or even murdered.

Slavery was ended not by the rule and proclamations of one man, it took rebellion by both slaves and abolitionists that tore the nation apart before slavery (at least in name and by law) was abolished.

Women's suffrage was not gained by sitting home and trying to elect sympathetic representatives, but by women taking the streets, demanding support from their partners and openly rebelling both in word and deed.

Civil rights, with all due credit to King, Malcom X, and others, were hardly won by electing "fair-minded" officials. Rather, industry and society, as a whole, was brought to its knees by open rebellion, deliberate violation of existing laws, and the beatings, deaths, and arrests of thousands of committed persons joined together in a power which ultimately became greater than the power of the state.

The same has been true in one degree or another of every other struggle for human rights, including but not limited to the movement for Gay Rights and the Vietnam anti-war movement that finally ended an unpopular war so decimating to both nations.

During all of those struggles, people began to realize that voting, marching, writing letters,

petitioning, and teach-ins were just not enough. People realized that to make government move, we had to move it ourselves, that no one could or would do it for us, that there were no “saviors” except ourselves.

As Dr. King pointed out, unjust laws, that is, laws that fail to uphold human dignity, need to be broken.

As our history shows, oppression spawns, every time, the determination by citizens to act in violation of the law. We must deliberately and consciously resist the power of the state, to become aware again of our power when we organize for revolution.

And, sad to say, that is where we are today. We are without other recourse because we are without democracy. We are without law and reason, because the law is designed to protect the interests of those in power, and those in power are without reason.

Our world, the world our children are inheriting is in danger as never before. The danger is not only from the massive accumulation of wealth by a handful of people who now have more power than many nations of the world, but also what they do with that power. These people care about nothing other than continuing to gain and gather power by any means necessary. They are without ethics, without morals, without any compulsion other than continued accumulation.

It's what they do with their accumulated power and wealth that makes them so different, so criminal, so undeserving and unworthy of respect. It's the trading of stocks, the hoarding of “commodity futures” to drive up prices, the deliberate excessive profit taking, the funding of wars from which they profit, the plundering of the earth's resources that brings them profit and our planet closer to environmental destruction that make them different from you and me. We are not like them, and we must glory in that.

And so, we are left with little choice, at this point in our history, but to use the power we have, legally and illegally, to combat this continued destruction of our world.

They are not about to create any more jobs than they absolutely need to make a profit. They are not about to cease convincing our officials to push for more fossil fuel extraction even though the results are already proving disastrous. They are not about to support greater taxation on their already bloated profits, even though they are now taxed at a lower level than at anytime in recent history. They are, to put it simply, not about to stop.

It is up to us to stop them, to create the conditions in which we can once again, be neighbors, be friends, be supportive of each other, be the society in which we do not cast aside those born into a poorer economic background, to stand up, collectively and say that we will do whatever is necessary to end this disaster.

Along with legal activity we must be willing to break the law, stand and be arrested, stuff the jails when possible, be proud of “going to jail for justice”, understand once again that we, those who created this wealth, have a right to feed our families, to work, to not worry about losing our homes, to see our children educated to their maximum potential, and, simply....to live without fear.

In 1976, a country western singer named James Talley, recorded a song titled “Are They Gonna Make Us Outlaws Again”. Like Dylan's song quoted at the start of this article, it was prophetic and the last verse reads:

Now there's always been a bottom

And there's always been a top

And someone took the orders

And someone called the shots

And someone took the beatin', Lord

And someone got the prize

Well, that may be the way it's been

But that don't mean it's right.

James Talley was correct. It's NOT right, and we have a moral and ethical responsibility to do something about it. So do it.

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